

A Historical Lineage of Black Preservation

Analysis

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Methods

Through the use of participatory observation, I was able to get a thorough understanding of the historical building that now is home to FOSCI. I have been volunteering with Families of Slain Children for a year and I have seen firsthand the impact they've made in the Jacksonville community. Through grassroots initiatives they have been able to help a plethora of families and individuals that are dealing with or have dealt with structural violence.

In addition, I was able to solicit Ms. Tonya Weathersbee, a former journalist for the Florida Times Union, for more information on the article she wrote in 2009 titled, "Ducote's survival: You can bank on it." She provided me with valuable resources pertaining to the institution. Another great resource was the Jacksonville Free Press archives from 2013 which was the 75th anniversary for Ducote Federal Credit Union.

I also went to the Durkeeville Historical Society, a prospective buyer of the Ducote building in 2016. Since the building's location is in the heart of Durkeeville, the staff there was able to share information on how important this institution was to the residents in the Durkeeville community.

I will be centering this research into the discipline of residential genealogy and historic preservation.

The building located at 2212 Myrtle Avenue is in the heart of the Northside Jacksonville community, Durkeeville, it was a vibrant, affluent Black community. This community reflected Black independence, self-reliance, and entrepreneurship. It fostered in its residents' Black pride and perseverance. The community flourished, providing a safe haven for African Americans in Jacksonville and establishing a legacy that is still upheld and commemorated through organizations like Durkeeville Historical Society. Although it is apparent that the area has changed drastically economically, following the crack epidemic and "the War on Drugs" initiatives. The way grassroots organizations have addressed social problems amongst their residents has remained constant. The residential genealogy of the building at 2212 Myrtle Avenue is a viable example of this, housing two organizations that addressed the dire needs of the community during the apparent time, both providing an abundance of resources to help people's lives. The underlying theme of Black preservation and perseverance is filtered through the Ducote Federal Credit Union and Families of Slain Children.

Introduction

Oftentimes within the African diaspora there is a heavy emphasis on the oppressed, subjugated, and marginalized position of people within the sphere. In particular, when examining the African diaspora in the United States of America, there is a lack of agency given to people of African descent. This passivity is apparent in the history that is focused on in schools; the standardized, soul-less accounts of enslaved people on plantations below the Mason Dixie Line is distributed. Rather than focusing on the agency, creativity and resilience of African enslaved people that expressed their will to survive in the social constraints that alienated them. Showing the effortful ways African Americans adapted to the social advances that were not giving to them, this research will localize it to Jacksonville, Florida, by examining the rich history and heritage of the African American community in Durkeeville.

This project will specifically be observing the location of the first Black owned credit union (Ducote Federal Credit Union) in Jacksonville, FL and the usage of the historical structure of the building today. The historical lineage of the building from the 1960s to 2020, will showcase the main focus of the organization that utilized the building was and is to serve the African American population in Jacksonville, Florida. Through dispelling the myths of helplessness and intellectual potential, that is so heavily focused on in the dominant European Anglo-Saxon history, it will emphasize the perseverance of people in the diaspora and their hope to create a progressive life for themselves and generations to come.

WHERE ART AND COMMUNITY
COME TOGETHER"
Mural painted on 1801 North Myrtle
Ave historic building (built in 1945).



Conclusion

Ducote Federal Credit Union is such a small detail within the overall African Diaspora but exemplifies the ways African Americans adapted to attain personal success when social advances were not given to them. Seeing those advancements still being the grounds for the physical structure that now houses Families of Slain Children, illustrates how impactful it has been for African Americans to establish places of resources for their community.

The overall essence of 2212 Myrtle Avenue has been to and is to benefit the Black community of the Northside of Jacksonville. The continuation of the grassroots efforts of creating spaces that ensue perseverance and preserve the community is absolute in this historical structure.

I hope this research encourages dialogue around the importance of residential genealogy of historical buildings. Noting how a historic building or landmark was utilized prior to its current use will not only encourage sustainable practices amongst utilization of property but also the overall ambience of an area. Whether the building's use is similar to its prior use, such as Ducote and FOSCI, or it's different, the recognition is still imperative for the current individuals inhabiting the space. Residential genealogy has been a source of interest in the world of historic preservation and the further uses of residential spaces but this same practice can be extended to all properties utilized by individuals.

History

Ducote Federal Credit Union

Financial institutions were not readily available to African American residents in the Jacksonville community, which left many vulnerable to loan sharks and abusive lenders. The Duval County Teacher's Credit Union, serviced the Duval County school system and their family members, however, did not allow African American members in 1930s. In 1938 railroad retiree, B. Kirklind and his wife, Rubiana, a teacher, were denied service so they created their own credit union. With \$210 and 42 members they ran their institution out of their home on Louisiana Street. They established a financial institution that enabled Black teachers to create saving accounts and borrow money, giving them financial opportunities.

Mr. Walter White, who eventually became Board Chairman, is one of many Black teachers that were denied access to the Duval County Teacher's Credit Union, now known as Community First, and utilized Ducote. In 1966, the credit union relocated to 2212 Myrtle Avenue in the heart of Durkeeville.

Families of Slain Children

Ducote Federal Credit Union building now houses the organization Families of Slain Children (FOSCI). Ms. Beverly McClain, founded FOSCI in 2006 after the tragic death of her son. The vision for the center was centered around grieving mothers and families and making a space in Jacksonville, Florida where they can receive support, comfort and counsel. This safe haven has remained strong in the midst of senseless violence throughout the Jacksonville community, affecting all its residents directly and indirectly. **Former CEO of CSX, Michael Ward, purchased the building on 2212 Myrtle Avenue in the same location Ducote Federal Credit Union was, and FOSCI moved there in 2019.**



2212 Myrtle Avenue

Across from Stanton College Preparatory School (aka New Stanton High School) and the Dallas Graham Branch of the public library.

The property is also home to FOSCI's Wall of Compassion, a memorial wall commemorating the names of Jacksonville's slain sons and daughters due to senseless violence.



"Durkeeville Historical Society
1293 W 19th Street

"DUCOTE: Historic African-American Owned Credit Union Celebrates 75 Years of Serving Jacksonville"
Article published in the Jacksonville Free Press
March 2013

References

- Tonya Weatherbees – "Ducote's survival: You can bank on it"
- The Jacksonville Free Press – DUCOTE: Historic African-American Owned Credit Union Celebrates 75 Years of Serving Jacksonville
- Families of Slain Children: <https://fosci.org/>

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